

NEWS RELEASE

MS Dept. of Marine Resources
1141 Bayview Ave., Biloxi 39530



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MDMR Executive Director appoints Chief Operating Officer, Chief Scientific Officer

BILOXI, Miss. – Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) Executive Director Joe Spraggins recently announced the appointment of Patrick Levine as Chief Operating Officer and Rick Burris as Chief Scientific Officer for the agency.

As Chief Operating Officer, Levine will assist Spraggins in development, prioritization and execution of the agency's mission and policies. Levine, who previously served as lieutenant colonel for the MDMR Office of Marine Patrol, served the Mississippi Gulf Coast in law enforcement for nearly 20 years.

He earned his Master of Science degree in criminal justice from William Carey University in 2017 and his Bachelor of Arts degree in political science from the University of Southern Mississippi in 2015. Levine also graduated from the Maritime Law Enforcement Academy at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Glynco, Georgia in 2002.

"Patrick Levine continues to be a great asset to the MDMR and the State of Mississippi," said Spraggins. "His education and experience will serve the MDMR well as he takes on this new role and I am confident he will make the right decisions as our agency works to enhance, protect and conserve our state's marine resources."

As the MDMR's Chief Scientific Officer, Burris is responsible for the scientific and technical programs managed by the agency. He will serve as the chief advisor to Spraggins overseeing major administrative programs and projects for the MDMR.

Burris began his career with the MDMR in 2007 as a fisheries scientist. From 2014 to 2019 he served as director of the Shrimp and Crab Bureau. Most recently he served as deputy director of the Office of Marine Fisheries where he assisted in the overall management of both the commercial and recreational marine fisheries for the State of Mississippi.

He received his bachelor of science and master of science degrees in marine biology from the University of Southern Mississippi. Burris is currently the president of the Mississippi Chapter of the American Fisheries Society and provides representation on

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the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission Technical Coordinating Committee, as well as serving as proxy to the Executive Director on the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council.

"Rick's expertise in marine fisheries will prove to be instrumental to sustainability of future resources," said Spraggins. "I am excited to have him in this important role for our agency and using his extensive knowledge to protect, conserve and enhance our state's marine resources."

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is dedicated to enhancing, protecting and conserving marine interests of the state by managing all marine life, public trust wetlands, adjacent uplands and waterfront areas to provide for the optimal commercial, recreational, educational and economic uses of these resources consistent with environmental concerns and social changes. Visit the DMR online at dmr.ms.gov.

Photos courtesy MS Department of Marine Resources

- 1. Patrick Levine**
- 2. Rick Burris**

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